

Northern Mount Victoria Historical Society Walking Guide Tour (Alan Middleton-Olliver)

Captain C.W. Mein Smith's original map "Plan of the Town of Wellington, Port Nicholson, 14 August 1840"

For the New Zealand Company established the basic street structure for Mount Victoria. Whereas southern Mount Victoria was an extension of the Te Aro flat grid street pattern, the steepness of the land in northern Mount Victoria, dictated some alteration to the grid pattern.

The original streets of the suburb were Majoribanks, Pirie and Ellice in the east west direction, Brougham and Austin Streets and Kent Terrace in the north south direction, with Roxburgh, Mcfarlane, and Hawker streets and Clyde Quay in the northern area.

The map also shows the proposed canal route along to the Basin and Hawker street going over the hill and joining onto Oriental Terrace, now Oriental Parade. Approximately 36 acres were surveyed and defined in the northern area. Initial building development was haphazard as some acres had been purchased by land speculators.

Thomas Ward's 1891 Survey of Wellington map shows the number of streets and pedestrian lanes in Mount Victoria had increased from 10 to 27, and by 1933 there were 47. Studying the Street maps and examining the Wises Directories gives a good indication of the development of the streets. These streets were at varying widths, including pedestrian lanes, and resulted from the haphazard subdivision of the original acres and the peculiarities of local topography. Some streets began as small private pedestrian lanes, which were only taken over by the Council at a much later date.

Majoribanks Street runs off to the right. It was named after Stewart Marjoribanks, MP, an original Director of the NZ Company.

Turn into Majoribanks St and cross onto the north side. The Wellington Almanack counted 7 households in Majoribanks St in 1865, 14 in 1875 and 48 in 1885.

The office of the panel beaters (Autospray Panel Works) was once the premises of a laundry run by a cycasin of Chinese families - beginning as the Gooe Jim Laundry in 1915, changing ownership to the Beng Tung in 1920 and to the Chan Foon and Co in 1934. It only closed as such in 1980. The Wises Directories show that a variety of businesses occupied this block over the years, including fruiterers and building yards.

On the opposite side of the road is a group of four interesting old shops. Above the cafe reads "Jas Farley, est 1904, Cash Butcher", a reminder of days past. Note the interesting false facades on these shops.

Turn left into **Roxburgh St**, named after the ship "The Duke of Roxburgh", the third emigrant ship to arrive in Wellington (8-2-40). There are some original Edwardian houses at the bottom of this street.

A narrow street go off here on the right - Fallowfield Avenue, the name origin of which is not recorded. This street appears on Wards 1890 map as a narrow pedestrian lane.

On the left is the back view of the **Wellington Central Fire Station. Clyde Quay School** was originally built on the fire station site in 1889, with Mr Grundy as the Headmaster. The main classroom block was on the Roxburgh St side. There was tarsealed playgrounds on Clyde Quay side with a small building called "Infants School". Shifting the school to build the fire station was a controversial decision.

The **Fire Station** was built between 1935-37, costing 90,000 pounds. It was opened on 1-12-37 by the Governor General Lord Galway. The new station was a great improvement on the Mercer St headquarters which had become cramped and inadequate over the years. The building was designed by C.H. Mitchell in a "stripped classical style", with some art deco decoration. Problems were experienced when building the foundations for the building because of tidal flooding. The building housed 9 appliances, and 21 married and 33 single men in the accommodation blocks. The Clock in the tower came from the Old Wellington Town Hall. It removed from the Old Town Hall in 1934 when the tower was deemed an earthquake risk, and installed here in 1937. A plaque on the building frontage says the funds for the clock were bequeathed by the late John Blundell, and presented to the City in 1925. Architect Mitchell built many other buildings in Wellington including the Waterloo Hotel.

Outside no. 20, on the right, is a large Olive tree, listed in the WCC's District Scheme. Other Olive trees were planted in the street at the suggestion of the Mt Victoria Residents' Association during the 1980's.

Caroline St is off to the right. It was named after the wife of the constructor, an early builder called Jacobson. This street wasn't on the original Wellington map nor was it on Wards 1891 map. Ward's 1891 map shows this side of Roxburgh St still unsubdivided, with Town Acre 376 still intact, so this street was a later development.

Further on, on the right is **No. 30 Roxburgh St** - architect - J.M Dawson, built 1923. Still in its original condition, this house is in the "colonial regency" style, which features include the symmetrical facade, louvred shutters, sash windows with small panes and hipped roof. Dawson had an architectural practice in Wellington from 1906-46, and built other buildings such as the Dixon St Hope Gibbons building in 1925.

Off to the left is **Hood St**. It was originally named McKenzie St, but renamed Hood to commemorate the visit of the British Special Service Squadron in 1924. The vessel "Hood" was amongst them and was the largest battle cruiser in the world. It was sunk during World War 2 off Iceland.

Further along still is **No. 46 Roxburgh St** - architect - James Bennie, built 1904, Italianate style but with a New Zealand influence in the use of cast iron and lead lights. The building is reminiscent of English Victorian brick terrace houses. Bennie practised in Wellington from 1903-23, building many other local buildings, several in Courtenay Place including the Paramount Theatre (1917).

Roxburgh Street turns right and splits into two sections. Take the higher section. The first street on the left is Prince St, another infill street which appears on Stones 1911 map.

Turn into the second street - **Mcfarlane Street**. It divides into two sections, take the eastern upper section. This street is named after Rev John Macfarlane who has three claims to fame. He was the first minister to come out on a New Zealand Company emigrant vessel (Bengal Merchant the 4th to arrive on 20-2-40), the first parish minister in Port Nicholson and the first presbyterian minister to enter NZ. He returned to Scotland for a visit in 1844, became unwell and died there.

At the first turning bay look out to the left for a view of Wellington city and the harbour. Standing here you can see why the City Council adopted the motto "Suprema a situ" in 1878.

The road immediately below, and partly obscured, was originally named **Clyde Quay**, after a ship which was travelling from Wanganui to Wellington in 1841 which hit rocks and beached in Kaiwharawhara. Clyde Quay ran from Courtenay Place to Fitzgerald Point where the road became Oriental Quay on to Point Jerningham. The name **Oriental Parade** absorbed both these names in the early twentieth century. Oriental Parade was named after the emigrant ship Oriental, the second to arrive in Wellington on 30 January 1840.

Most of land immediately below is reclaimed. The original shore line runs along Wakefield St. A plaque is sited

in the pavement in northern side of Wakefield St, just by the pedestrian crossing to the supermarket, indicating the exact shoreline in 1840.

The **Te Aro** reclamation

Freyberg Pool was the site of the first public swimming baths - **Te Aro Baths**, opened in 1865. Built, owned and operated by Mr and Mrs Henry Meech, who arrived on Oriental, it was a high tide beach cordoned off by a fence of totara piles with changing rooms and refreshment facilities. Mixed bathing was strictly prohibited and Ladies swam from 9am to 2pm, with gentlemen before or after these hours. A finer building was built by the city engineer in 1901 and Freyberg Pool itself was built later, opening on 14 December 1963 as a tepid pool.

The **Boat Sheds** were built by the Harbour Board in 1904 in response to the Port Nicholson Yacht Clubs growing popularity and need for a shelter for its small craft. Young and Sellar were contracted to build the shed foundations and skids provided the rooves were no higher than the seawall. Some land was reclaimed for them and by 1907 20 sheds were built. Because the rents were high (7-23 pounds), they proved hard to rent. The yacht club built a clubhouse in 1919 at the boat harbours eastern end, moving from its Thorndon Headquarters. 14 further boat sheds were built in 1922. The accompanying **Marina** was built around 1908. In 1958 a new clubhouse was built on the current site. The current building there is a recent addition.

The **Overseas Passenger Terminal** was built in 1963, by the firm Morton, Calder, Fowler and Styles. A wharf, **Clyde Quay Wharf**, had been built on this site around 1905. **Chaffers Marina** on the left of the passenger terminal, was built a couple of years ago.

In the middle distance is the much discussed art deco **Herd St Post Office** building, built by Edmund Anscombe in 1939.

Chaffers Park was the site of the **Wellington City Corporation Works Depot**, which was dismantled in the 1980's.

[At the very end of Macfarlane St take the small path leading up beside the Monastery. BEWARE the lower steps are in bad repair.]

The steps take you up the side of **Saint Gerards Church** designed by J.S Swan and built between 1907-10. The **Monastery**, on the northern side, was designed by F. de Jersey Clere. It was built in the early 1930's with depression labour, officially opening on 10 April 1932. The prominent position of these two buildings makes it one of Wellington's most memorable landmarks.

This site was originally known as "Clyde's Cliff". It was the site of the house of James Edward Fitzgerald, built in 1871, and called "Fitzgeralds Folly", because of its isolation from the town. Fitzgerald was an early prominent politician, Comptroller General from 1866, 1872 Commissioner of Audit, and Auditor General from 1878.

The Redemptorist Fathers of New Zealand purchased the site in 1905 for 500 pounds and lived in Fitzgerald's house until the Monastery was built. The group had established themselves in Australia and had done early missionary work in New Zealand. They established themselves in Dunedin in 1883, then Wellington in 1884. They established their first community in 1904 in Kilbirnie, and looked for a more permanent site. Fitzgerald's large house was demolished to make way for the monastery.

The **Church** is of a simple gothic design and seats 200. It was made of reinforced brickwork, plastered internally and cost 4998 pounds. The interior of the Church is noted for it's stained glass windows (Hardmann and Sons of Birmingham, England, 1908) and the Swan designed marble high altar.

The architect **Swan** had been articled to Clere, beginning his own practise in 1907. Swan built many bank buildings and buildings for the Catholic Church including Sacred Heart Convent (Erskine College) in 1907. He designed and lived in "The Moorings" in Glenbervie Tce, Thorndon.

British trained **Clere** was a pioneer in reinforced concrete construction. The monastery uses this technique with brick infill panels and gothic style windows. 40 tons of box steel were used in its construction. Clere also designed St Mary's of the Angels, Boucott St (1919-22), the Harbour Board Offices (1892) and neighbouring Shed 7 (1895-6).

Extensive restoration of the monastery buildings were undertaken in the late 1980's. The Fathers left in 1989, and the buildings were sold in 1993 for \$800,000 to the International Programme of Evangelisation (ICPE). The Wellington City Council purchased the steep grassed land below the monastery. Restoration of the buildings is an ongoing task. Both buildings have a category A classification from the NZ Historic Places Trust.

The origin of the name of **Hawker St** is uncertain - divided between C.C. Hawker, of Camelford, Cornwall, a supporter of the New Zealand Company or the Rev. R.S. Hawker, one of the Molesworth-Wakefield group of reformers, depending on which book you read. [\[check Streets of My City\]](#)

Go up eastwards up Moeller St and look north down into **Oriental Bay**.

Moeller St is named after Mr Philip Moeller, a Prussian Jew who came to New Zealand after having spent time in Victoria Australia, with mercantile interests relating to the gold rush. He came to Wellington and leased the Empire Hotel in 1875. When it was gutted by fire in 1876, he leased the Occidental Hotel - a 50 bedroom establishment on the corner of Johnston St and Lambton Quay. He also established a business in Willis St importing fancy goods. He was a City Councillor (1876-77), JP, and was heavily involved with the Jewish community. His family lived in Majoribanks St. He died in 1885 and is buried in the Jewish section of the Bolton Street Cemetery.

Oriental Bay was originally named **Duppa** after Mr George Duppa who resided there from 1840-1842 by Grass and Wilkinson Streets "cattle dealing and pig-jobbing". He named the bay "Oriental" after the second emigrant ship which arrived 31-1-40. The area was originally an inhospitable isolated place which eventually became popular in the 1890's with the beginning of a tram service to the area.

Cross Moeller Street, and turn right into **Shannon St**. Both Moeller and Shannon Streets both appear named on an 1880 map of Wellington by J Coleridge. This street was named after Mr G.V. Shannon, a prominent early settler who established with two others - Thompson Shannon & Co in Brandon St - precursors of now defunct department store DIC. In 1881 Shannon was amongst business men who decided to develop the Manawatu railway project after the Government favoured the Wairapapa line. When names for proposed townships were selected four of the Directors names were chosen - Shannon, Plimmer, Levin and Linton. The railway opened in 1886 and was taken over by the Government in 1908.

Sir Francis Kitts, City Councillor from 1950 and Wellington Mayor from 1956-74 lived at 25 Shannon St.

Between 2 and 5 o'clock on the morning of **May 30 1901**, 22 houses in the Hawker and Shannon Streets were destroyed by a fire fanned by gale force winds. The fire began on the downhill side of Hawker St and crossed the road and spread through the block to Shannon St. Miraculously no one was injured, but most houses and contents were completely destroyed.

The fire service had been complaining for several years about the lack of water pressure in the hilly suburbs, and

had been urging the Council to do something about the situation. In this case the water could only reach about 20 ft and the lack of water pressure severely hampered the capacity of the firemen to put out the fire. The houses in this area prior to the fire were grand two storied affairs. Those built after the fire were more modest mostly single storied dwellings and these are what we see today.

From the end of Shannon St there is a spectacular view to the south of the Basin Reserve, Museum (now closed) and Carillion, and the suburbs of Newtown and Brooklyn.

Take **Kennedy St**, a pedestrian lane downhill eastwards back to Hawker St. This street also appears on Coleridge's 1880 map and is part of a subdivision by Thomas Kennedy MacDonald (1847-1914) at that time. Mr MacDonald named Kennedy St after himself. He was a land and estate agent and was responsible for cutting up and roading Lipman Levy's estate. He was a prominent businessman involved with such enterprises as the Gear Meat Co, Wellington Woollen Mills, City Councillor (1877-78) and was a Chairman of the Harbour Board. His wife Francis was a leader, with Seddon's wife, of the Womens Social and Political League in the 1890's. In the Bolton Street Cemetery is the grave of the Kennedy's three sons, aged 3,4,5 who all died within 4 weeks of each other of Scarlet Fever in 1876. They had no more children.

Walk down Hawker St noting the pedestrian lanes going steeply back up the hill. These lanes are the only access to these houses. Interestingly both Kennedy and Vogel Streets appear on Ward's 1891 Wellington Map as full width roads - ie 40ft.

Doctors Commons was named after Doctors Commons in London, an area associated with the law.

Charles McIntyre was a local landowner and had a bakery in Tory St, hence the next lanes name - **McIntyre Avenue**.

Vogel Street was named after Sir Julius Vogel, Premier of New Zealand from 1873-75, then 1876, remembered for his grand public works schemes including the railways.

These last three lanes all appear on Ward's 1891 map.

A murder mystery is associated with **McIntyre Ave**. Seventeen year old Marie West, whose family lived at no 13, left home on 17th July 1947 to meet a girlfriend in Courtenay Place and go to a function at St Josephs Catholic Church at the Basin Reserve. She never met her friend or went to work the next day. Her badly decomposed body was found by a neighbour behind the West's own house on the Town Belt on 5th October. She had been strangled by string around her neck. The Coroner's report concluded "the cause of her death being strangulation, there being no evidence to show who caused the strangulation".

Some evidence suggested suicide, but other evidence suggested a second person must have been involved. There are many unanswered question to this case eg - why didn't the police search the area behind the Wests house after the girl disappeared? Whatever happened to her coat, bag, shoes and jewellery?

On the city side of Hawker St are two Art Deco style blocks of flats - **no. 11 Nissen Court** and **no. 9 - Hamilton Flats**.

At the end of Hawker St, on the corner with Majoribanks St is **no. 61 Majoribanks St** - an Arts and Crafts style house built in 1896-7 by Francis Penty. This rough cast house must have stood out against its Victorian villa neighbours when it was originally built. The house has been substantially added to and altered over time.

Across the road in Majoribanks St is **No. 62**. It was built 1934-5 by Jake King, of Dawson and King, in a

Georgian Revival Style. This is considered to be one of Kings finest houses - note the copper down pipe and copper roofed central bay window.

No 64 Majoribanks St, above this, built in 1927 is in the "Arts and Crafts" style.

Off to the left is Earls Terrace, called Normanby Terrace in Ward's 1891 map. The first Marquis of Normanby was Colonial Secretary at the time of the founding of Wellington, while his son was Governor of New Zealand from 1875-79. Stones 1911 map shows Earl Terrace, which becomes Earles Terrace in later maps.

Up Majoribanks St on the left is the very steep **Port St**, becoming **Stafford St** at the intersection at the top. Port St was an early subdivision done in the 1870's, whilst Stafford St was done in the early 1880's. Port St was named after a highly esteemed merchant Robert Port, who owned a business in Featherston St. Stafford St is named after Sir Edward Stafford, an early colonial statesman and premier from 1856-61, 1865-69, the briefly in 1872.

In 1996 the Wellington City Council discovered these two streets were still private roads and had never been officially taken over by the Council, although it had maintained them for a very long time. A search by the Council for the descendants of the owners to make a legitimate land purchase proved fruitless. The estimated \$160,000 land value had to be weighed up against the potential bill for unpaid rates since 1893!

Austin St to the right, was named after an early New Zealand Company official.

On the right on the corner (Majoribanks and Austin) is an Art Deco style apartment block - **Belvedere**. This was built by Edmund Anscombe in 1937 (Herd St P.O.). This is designed of reinforced concrete and plastered blockwork. Noted the curved corners, horizontal bands, wave patterned relief around the parapet and protruding v shaped bay windows. The building is considered one of the best examples of the Art Deco style in the city.

Along Austin St on the right is **Claremont Grove**, a no exit street. **Hazelcourt Apartments** on the right were built in 1958 and the site of the old Mt Victoria Bowling Club. The Club opened in 1889 and had a handsome pavilion built in 1898. The Club shifted to the Pirie Street park after the park area was created with Depression labour.

Looking up to the east is a good view of the **Town Belt**. Capt William Mein Smiths 1840 map set aside the ridges as "town belt" for public recreation, but it was promptly leased out by the provincial government who encouraged the clearing of the remaining bush. In October 1841 Governor Hobson decreed the whole town belt was reserved by the Crown for Public purposes. In 1873 it was vested in the new Wellington City Corporation "as a public Recreation Ground", but most was still leased out.

Most of the vegetation was removed within the first few years of settlement and the Mount Victoria slopes were used for grazing. Peter Tutchin who arrived on the Arab in 1841 had a dairy herd on slopes of Mt Victoria in early 1840s. The mountain remained bare until some large scale plantings above Pirie and Ellice Streets, amongst other areas, in 1880. More than a million trees, Bishops Pine, Monterey Pine, Macrocarpa and Eucalyptus, were planted in the Town Belt between 1926 and 1930's, mainly by the unemployed. Recent new plantings have been of local natives plants and shrubs.

Northern Mount Victoria Heritage Walking Guide.

Prepared by the Mount Victoria Historical Society Inc. DRAFT ONLY

If you have any information you could add to this guide, or have spotted any inaccuracies, or if you have any old photographs of Mt Victoria or old street maps of Wellington - please contact Julie or Alan, ph 3851022, 37 Ellice St, Mt Victoria. The Society intends to eventually publish this guide in a booklet form with photos.

Queen Victoria Statue - Commissioned 1902. Sculptor Alfred Drury, ARA. Installed in P. O. Square in 1905, and shifted here in 1911.

Majoribanks, Roxburgh, Mcfarlane, Hawker Streets and Clyde Quay, all original streets on Mein-Smith's 1840 map.

Kent and Cambridge Terraces - named after Queen Victoria's father and uncle respectively. Planned as a canal route linking the Harbour with an inland dock (Basin Reserve) but 1855 earthquake uplifted land making plan unfeasible.

Courtenay Place - named after Viscount Courtenay, a NZ Company official. Main transport route.

Taj Mahal - built by WCC in 1928 as public conveniences. Closed in 1966, sold in 1980 and used as a restaurant.

City Destructor - 1888-1930's, then bus depot. **Morgue** built alongside, demolished in 1950's. (Chaffers supermarket site)

Majoribanks St - named after NZ Company official Stewart Majoribanks, MP. The City hotel originally on northern corner. Note interesting shops, laundry.

Embassy Theatre - 1924, Architect - Llewellyn Williams, "stripped classical style". Originally called de Luxe, renamed Embassy in 1945.

Samuel Brees sketch of early 1840's, of this corner, shows the windmill owned by Simmonds and Hoggard.

Lipman Levy - owner of same block, cut up on his death in 1880 forming streets of his name.

Roxburgh St - named after 3rd emigrant ship to arrive in Wellington " The Duke of Roxburgh".

Wellington Central Fire Station, 1935-37, Architect - C.H.Mitchell. Original site of **Clyde Quay School**, built in 1889.

Olive Tree - outside no 20 Roxburgh St, listed by Council

Caroline St - named after wife of builder Jacobson.

No. 30 Roxburgh St - 1923, Architect - J.M.Dawson, colonial regency style.

Hood St - named after British cruiser "Hood" which visited Wellington in 1924.

No. 46 Roxburgh St - 1904, Architect J.Bennie, Italianate style.

Mcfarlane St - named after Rev John Macfarlane, 1st presbyterian minister in NZ.

View west from Mcfarlane St -

- **Clyde Quay** below, now called Oriental Parade, after an early emigrant ship.
- **Te Aro land reclamation**, from 1880's -1920's. Original shore line in Wakefield St.
- Freyberg Pool, site of **Te Aro Baths**, operated by Meech's from 1865.
- **Clyde Quay Hotel**, demolished in 1970
- **Clyde Quay Slipway** operated from 1870's-80's
- **Boat Sheds**, built by Harbour Board between 1904 and 1920's. **Marina** - built about 1908.
- **Clyde Quay Wharf** built approx 1905, superseded by **Overseas Passenger Terminal** built in 1963.
- **Herd St Post Office** building, 1939, architect Edmund Anscombe, art deco style.
- **Chaffers Park** - site of Council Works Depot, demolished in the 1980's.

St Gerard's Church, 1907-10, Architect - J.S Swan. **Monastery**, 1932, Architect - F. de Jersey Clere. Original site of "Fitzgeralds Folly".

Hawker St - named after either C.C. Hawker, NZ Company supporter, or R.S. Hawker, from the Molesworth/Wakefield group of reformers.

Moeller St - named after Philip Moeller, Occidental Hotel Licensee and City Councillor.

Shannon St - named after Mr G.V Shannon, prominent early settler, retailer, and developer of Manawatu railway project. Ex Wellington Mayor Sir Frank Kitts lived at no.25

Shannon/Hawker St Fire - 30 May 1901, 22 houses destroyed.

Kennedy St - named after Thomas Kennedy Macdonald, land and estate agent, prominent businessman, developer of Lipman Levy's estate.

Doctor's Common - named after place of same name in London.

McIntyre Avenue - named after local landowner Charles McIntyre. Site of Marie West unsolved murder in 1947.

Vogel St - named after Sir Julius Vogel, NZ Premier 1873-5, 1876.

No. 11 and no. 9 Hawker St - 1920's Art Deco apartment blocks.

No. 61 Majoribanks St (corner) - 1896-7, Architect Francis Penty, Arts and Crafts style.

No. 62 Majoribanks St - 1934-5, Jake King, Georgian revival style.

No. 64 Majoribanks St - 1927, Arts and Crafts style.

Port St - named after prominent merchant Robert Port.

Stafford St - named after Sir Edward Stafford, colonial statesman and premier.

Austin St - named after early NZ Company official

Belevedere - cnr Majoribanks/Austin Sts, 1937, Edmund Anscombe. Art Deco style

No. 7 Austin St, - site of **Ettrick Cottage**, earliest remaining cottage in Mt Victoria (shifted to 19 Paterson St in 1994).

Hazelcourt Apartments, Claremont Grove, 1958, site of former Mt Victoria Bowling Club.

Bosworth Tce - named after Capt J. T Bosworth, Boer War veteran.

Wellington East Girl's College Main Building (distant view) - 1923, architect C. A. Lawrence, "stripped Classical Style".

Town Belt - Land set aside by NZ Company for "public enjoyment". Original vegetation removed and area used for grazing. Pines planted in 1930's, now being replanted with local natives.

No. 35 Austin St - Edwardian Box Bay Villa, precursor to Bay Villa.

Elizabeth St - named after Mrs Elizabeth Woodman, nee Muir, whose family owned property in the area. NB original cottages and two storied dwellings eg no 68-72. Street extended downhill to cater for trams after Pirie St tram Tunnel built in 1906.

Brougham St - named after early emigrant ship or Lord Brougham, Lord Chancellor of England.

Crossways - private residence purchased by Presbyterian Church when they sold their church corner Pirie St/Kent Tce in 1978. **Norfolk Pine** in garden is Council listed.

Clyde Quay School - moved here from Fire Station site in the 1930's.

Moncrieff St - subdivided in 1929, named after Lieutenant Moncrieff, ill fated aviator in Sydney to Wellington flight in 1928.

Extra notes edited out

Oriental Bay with a rocky shore and steep cliffs above and only a rough track as access. So inhospitable that in 1840 the first small pox patient in the settlement was quarantined there with a doctor and nurse in a tent. When the patient recovered everything was burnt. The town's first pleasure gardens were created on Mr Duppa's land by David Wilkinson, who arrived in May 1841. He was a professional gardener who created a dozen acres of gardens.

"Wilkinsons Tea Gardens" were a popular Sunday diversion for early settlers. By the late 1870's "marine villas" were being built along the Parade. By the 1890's with road improvements and a tram service the area became well populated. Most houses date from this period. The sea wall was built between 1910-20 and the Norfolk Pines planted. Beach slowly began to accumulate and the image of the bay improved.

In 1919 a semicircular platform had been built and the band rotunda that used to be near the Town Hall, was shifted here. The current building was built by WCC engineers in 1936 and constructed of cast in-situ reinforced concrete, in an art deco style. In 1979 the rotunda was refurbished. A restaurant occupies the second story addition whilst community rooms occupy downstairs.